



The Surviving Spirit Newsletter – Healing the Heart Through the Creative Arts -

Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars. - Kahlil Gibran

Hi Folks,

4/20/11

I hope that all is well for you and yours – no complaints here, in fact lots good news to share. First off, the snow is gone from my yard –YES!!! And soon it will be time to mow the lawn, but I actually like to do that and still grateful that I am physically able to do so.

A few things I'd like to share in regards to some events that I will be a part of next week, and then we can dive right into the helpful resources and information that have been compiled for this month's newsletter.

First up, I'm quite excited to be traveling off to Michigan at the beginning of the week to co-present with Angela Agnew on trauma informed care, awareness and healing. Angela has an impressive background and life history that says not only *survivor*, but *thriver*. And she graciously shares her knowledge, caring and skills with others to help aid them in their healing journey. I was fortunate to meet Angela a few weeks ago when we were a part of a group working on a Peer Engagement Guide for Trauma. Unfortunately, I do not have a website to share for Angela.

We will be presenting at the Michigan 3rd Annual Statewide Conference - "*Promoting Recovery, Supporting Wellness & Facilitating Change*" on Integrated Services for individuals with Co-Occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders - there are 550 participants already registered for the 2011 event to be held at the Hyatt Regency Dearborn at 600 Town Center Drive in Dearborn, MI, 48126. Very cool!!! And I am hoping to get to meet some of the folks who receive this newsletter while I am out there.

http://www.macmhb.org/Description/COD_Conference.html

Later in the week I will be closer to home in Massachusetts presenting a workshop titled - "*Music, Creative Expression, and Telling Our Story*" for the **Vital Cycles** Spring Retreat. It is so important to tell one's story and to be heard – it can be hard to do, but it so crucial in one's healing journey to speak out. I believe this to be true, yet realize how hard it is – this quote helps to tie it all together -

"When we speak we are afraid our words will not be heard or welcomed. But when we are silent, we are still afraid. So it is better to speak." – Audre Lorde

I'm blessed to have many friends who are part of Vital Cycles and looking forward to seeing them and catching up.

You can learn more about Vital Cycles' healing mission at – <http://www.vitalcycles.org/>

This is quite exciting to share – This is the latest recording [about a month ago] of my song, “Brush Away Your Tears” – a song I wrote for those hurt as children. My dear friends, Chris Schindler on bass guitar – a childhood friend since I was thirteen years old and Roy D’Innocenzo on lead guitar, who I’ve known since the 80’s; I represented Roy in my business days and drummed in his band every now and then when a drummer had quit – so I would fill in till a replacement was found. These two friends also epitomize “peer-support”, because they never wavered in their support of me as a friend and as a person when my PTSD troubles began - they also play on my album releases.

And for the chorus singers, we have several survivors friends of mine and the two guys are folks I know from the Oprah Winfrey Shows on males being sexually abused as children. They also brought their teen-aged daughters and one his wife to sing-a-long with us. So a shared endeavor of friends, peers and so much more. We had a lot of fun in recording this and then we had a great Pizza- Party afterwards to help celebrate this creative endeavor that helps to raise awareness and advocacy regarding child abuse.

<http://www.youtube.com/user/mcstrain> My You Tube channel

<http://www.youtube.com/mcstrain#p/a/F2DC2FEDED6FBDA03/2/fivbYVZZBac> - new live studio version of the song

You can also purchase the studio album version [full band & off of “Waitin’ For a Train”] of this song as a download at the Surviving Spirit website or from I-Tunes.

<http://store.survivingspirit.com/webstore/music.html>

Adverse childhood experiences such as trauma, abuse or mental health concerns will indeed impact all of us for the rest of our lives, but there is *hope, healing and help*, and these resources can be a catalyst for change.

For me personally, child abuse in all of its forms is what we as a society really needs to address – it is the largest silent epidemic that is still ignored by too many. The harmful consequences of this denial has led to so much suffering and pain.

“It shouldn’t hurt to be a child.”

April is **National Child Abuse Prevention Month**, *a time to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect* and create strong communities to support children and families.

The following website links contains all kinds of helpful resources to raise awareness for this important mission – we need to talk about this and stop sweeping it under the rug as far too many still do. Society needs to stop taking the stance of *The Three Monkeys of – Hear no evil, See no evil and Speak no evil.*

[1] **The Child Abuse Prevention Association** – *together we can prevent and treat child abuse*

Their Mission is to prevent and treat all forms of child abuse by creating changes in individuals, families and society that strengthen relationships and promote healing.

And their Vision believes that children should be valued and nurtured by both their families and the larger family of humankind. [*The Surviving Spirit* echoes these beliefs]

“25 - 50% of all children will experience some form of abuse during childhood. One of every three girls will be sexually abused before the age of 18; and one out of every five to seven boys will be sexually abused by 18.” [I’ve seen other studies that show one out of every four girls and one out of every six boys who have been sexually abused – what we do know is that too many children are being hurt and society needs to stop acting like the ostrich that sticks its head in the sand.]

<http://www.childabuseprevention.org/>

[2] Child Abuse Awareness – some great music is playing while this video clip shares some sobering facts – it’s only 1:26 minutes long, but there is a lot said in that short period of time – it asks the Question – *How will you respond?*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwOczZvKk8&feature=related>

[3] The Child Welfare Information Gateway promotes the safety, permanency, and well-being of children, youth, and families by connecting child welfare, adoption, and related professionals as well as the general public to information, resources, and tools covering topics on child welfare, child abuse and neglect, out-of-home care, adoption, and more.

<http://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/preventionmonth/>

[4] The mission of **Prevent Child Abuse America** is to *"prevent the abuse and neglect of our nation's children"* and includes all forms of abuse and neglect, whether physical, sexual, educational, or emotional.

<http://www.preventchildabuse.org/index.shtml>

[5] April is also **Sexual Assault Awareness Month**

The month of April has been designated Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) in the United States. The goal of SAAM is to raise public awareness about sexual violence and to educate communities and individuals on how to prevent sexual violence.

<http://www.nsvrc.org/saam>

[6] The Surviving Spirit website has links to well over two hundred resources offering *hope, healing and help*, for trauma, abuse and mental health concerns [and more to come]. We share some of the major websites and also the websites, blogs and newsletters from our peers. If you have sites to recommend, please let us know.

<http://www.survivingspirit.com/resources.html>

[7] From our friends at **1 in 6** -

CNN's Don Lemon spoke with Dr. David Lisak, a member of the group 1in6.org and an abuse survivor himself, about why male victims tend to not expose the sexual offenses against them. [Please note that the news reporter also shares of his own abuse] It's short and to the point and well worth watching folks - a good interview with some great commentary, sharing and insights.

<http://newsroom.blogs.cnn.com/2011/02/23/male-sex-abuse-victims-often-suffer-in-silence/>

This link shares the Public Service Announcement from **1 in 6** that features the well-known actor, Harrison Ford reaching out to help raise awareness -

<http://www.1in6.org/man-educating-myself/media-archive/videos/>

[8] Svava Brooks is a mom, a housewife and one heck of an advocate, who I am honored to know – on her home page, she shares some great thoughts and insight for healing and why it is so important to be speaking out and raising awareness on child sexual abuse.

<http://speak4change.com/>

Svava is also part of **TAALK** [Talk About Abuse to Liberate Kids] – another great organization who believe – “*The Single Biggest Barrier to Resolving the Child Sexual Abuse Epidemic is Silence*” “Please Believe It - Become Aware - Get Educated - Break the Silence -You Can Protect a Child from Sexual Abuse”. On April 29th – 30th you can also be a part of their 24 hour radio TAALK-a-thon in raising awareness.

You can learn more at - <http://www.taalk.org/>

“Silence is the abuser’s friend.”

[9] Healing Self-Inflicted Violence (SIV). - <http://healingselfinjury.org/>

Ruta Mazelis started The Cutting Edge newsletter back in 1990 to stay in touch with other people whom she had met and to help create spaces for people to talk about living with SIV as a way to offer *hope and understanding*.

I first learned of Ruta and her work back in 1993 when I became involved with the NH Incest Center, so it was really nice to finally get to meet her recently while we were in Washington, DC working on a Peer Engagement Guide for Trauma Awareness. E-mails are a great tool, but they don't replace that face-to-face contact.

Please visit Ruta's website to learn more of her important work that addresses another taboo subject that so many are afraid to talk about, but we need to talk about it and not be afraid too.

[10] **My Name is Sandra** – This is a very powerful video clip [4:31 minutes long] that will get you to thinking about some of the long-term affects of child sexual abuse – yet it also shows *great hope, healing and a promise of a better life*.

Sandra is another great example of one who has not only survived, but she has learned to thrive.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVY4_FCEiMY

[11] **The Silence** –PBS Documentary - FRONTLINE examines a little-known chapter of the Catholic Church sex abuse story — decades of abuse of Native Americans by priests and other church workers in Alaska. Through candid interviews with survivors, producer Tom Curran and reporter Mark Trahan examine the abuse by a number of men who worked for the church along Alaska's far west coast in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

I watched this half-hour documentary last night – very powerful, gut wrenching, heartbreaking and yet, it offers *hope, healing & help*. Elsie Boudreau and the others who speak out give a voice and help to inspire so many others to come forward – kudos to them and for those who produced this film!!!! You can watch the film from this link or buy the DVD.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/the-silence/>

[12] **Parental Alienation** is another form of child abuse that needs to be addressed – for some of us who have been labeled “*mentally ill*”, it has been used against us to keep us from our children, even with no history of violence or abuse – a sobering fact – 90% of parents with a “*mental illness*” lose custody of their children – how sad and how wrong.

“Parental alienation, sometimes called Hostile Aggressive Parenting, is a behavior by a parent, or an adult a child trusts, such as a grandmother/father, mother, aunt, uncle, etc., whether conscious or unconscious, that could create alienation in the relationship between a child and a parent.

Parental alienation, or Hostile Aggressive Parenting, can be mild and temporary or extreme and ongoing. Most researchers believe that any alienation of a child against a parent is harmful to the child's emotional and mental health. Extreme, obsessive, and

ongoing Parental Alienation can cause terrible psychological damage to children extending well into adulthood.”

To learn more, please visit - <http://www.paawarenessday.com/> and

[13] **Family Wars**: The Alienation of Children - NEW HAMPSHIRE BAR JOURNAL, Volume 34, No. 1, March 1993 by Peggie Ward, Ph.D. and J. Campbell Harvey, Esquire

<http://www.fact.on.ca/Info/pas/ward02.htm>

[14] **Alternatives 2011** - *Coming Home: Creating Our Own Communities Of Wellness and Recovery*

For scholarship applications and a Call for Papers, please visit –

<http://www.alternatives2011.org/>

This is always a great event for learning, networking and so much more!!! I'm honored to be a part of this years Planning Committee.

Take care, Mike

ps. Please share this with your friends & if you have received this in error, please let me know.

*Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.
~Martin Luther King, Jr.*

A diagnosis is not a destiny.

www.survivingspirit.com – Healing the Heart Through the Creative Arts

http://survivingspirit.com/Speakers_Bureau.html - Speakers' Bureau

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Surviving-Spirit/138180506227288> – Facebook – Surviving Spirit

www.mskinnermusic.com - Hope, Healing, & Help for Trauma, Abuse, & Mental Health through music, resources, & advocacy

www.new.facebook.com/profile.php?id=635415804%20 – Facebook - Michael Skinner
- Friends, Music & Advocacy

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"BE the change you want to see in the world." Mohandas Gandhi